

Wisconsin Conservation Congress-Upland Game Committee Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress-Upland Game Committee was held on Friday, August 18, 2006 at Country Springs Hotel, Stevens Point, Wisconsin. The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by Chairman Risley.

Committee members present: Ken Risley, Bob Wilberscheid, Kevin Smaby, Armond Zastrow, J. Michael Gould, Dave Breunig, Wayne Schmidt, Ken Keller, Ron Buchmann, James Kriska, Fred Kawell, Jim Burmeister, Ken Vertein, Roger Reas, Gary Van Bellinger, Dale Ebert, Larry Peterson, Mark Glander

Committee members excused: Dave Natter, Ervin Pagels, William Tisch, Michael Whiteside

Committee members not excused: Mark Hinz, Donald Thompson

DNR staff present: Scott Hull, Carl Mesman

Scott Hull, Upland Wildlife Ecologist and Farm Bill Coordinator, introduced himself. Scott started with the Department as of May 1, 2006. He then gave a power point presentation on a Sharp-tailed grouse management plan update. The first plan meeting was Aug. 8, 2006 at Crex Meadows. The group looked at declining numbers, the fact that the plan in place is 10yrs.old, the lack of a coordinated effort statewide and recent interest from sportsmen.

Hull said the plan is not just genetics and translocation, barren habitat planning and harvest management. His intent is to "set the bar high."

Hull described the process as Conservation Action Planning. It would define the project, its scope and people. It would also develop strategies and measure threats; contain analysis, objectives and action measuring monitoring. He is looking to spend one year writing a plan rather than the traditional five year plan writing.

Hull mentioned that a lack of genetic diversity is possibly causing a decline in Sharptails. He noted that habitat is "the 800 pound gorilla in the room." He stressed the need for a variety of partners to make the plan work.

Newly harvested/ burned areas appear to attract higher densities of birds. If birds were brought into the state to enhance numbers, they would probably come from Minnesota. Hull listed a timeline as follows: draft/outline- Sept, 2006; plan scoping-Oct., 2006, First rough draft-Jan., 2007; revisions- April, 2007; WPT team- May, 2007; Go to NRB-Summer, 2007.

Questions and discussion followed the presentation. Hull noted 10,000 acres of habitat would be needed to support 200 birds and funding is a big question.

Hull then distributed handouts on upland game forecast for 2006. They included 2006 pheasant stocking information, the Rural Mail Carrier Pheasant Survey, Spring Pheasant Survey 2006 Ruffed Grouse Drumming Survey 2006 and FY 2006 and 2007 Preliminary

Pheasant Stamp Projects Accomplishment Summary. Ringneck surveys showed a decline in birds, grouse up except in the southeast and sharp-tailed mixed.

Minutes from the 2005 meeting were read, corrected and approved 18-0.

Old Business was briefly discussed.

Resolution 020106 was presented for action. It called for the DNR to put “priority status” on sharp-tailed reintroduction in Ashland and Bayfield counties and areas south of Ashland. Discussion pursued. In light of Scott Hull’s presentation, Buchmann made a motion to reject, seconded by Verstein. Motion passed 18-0.

After further discussion, a motion was made by Burmeister, seconded by Buchmann to have the Upland Game Committee support development of a plan for Sharp-tailed Grouse to be presented next summer. Motion passed 18-0.

Member matters brought discussion about Upland Game possibly becoming the committee for turkey management and turkey stamp fund appropriation. No action was taken.

Peterson made a motion to oppose the downsizing of WCC committees, seconded by Smaby. Discussion included having at least one district member for each committee. Motion passed 18-0.

Additional comments and observations centered around potential coyote control, hunter recruitment/”Learn to Hunt” programs, resolution 320106 dealing with upland game hunting for the disabled on licensed game farms, reducing the hunting age, lack of land availability and distribution of game farm pheasants to Bong.

Motion to adjourn by J.M. Gould, seconded by Buchmann. Meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted: R.C. Wilberscheid